



## **Increased funding is urgently needed to support women-led responses to secure SRHR & address HIV**

ICW recognizes the urgency of increased and sustained funding for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), particularly for women living with HIV. As the only global network for women living with HIV, we have unique insight into the ways that securing women's SRHR is essential to realizing the right to health, achieving universal health coverage and to achieving the goals of the HIV response. A lack of bodily autonomy, gender based violence, lack of access to safe and stigma free sexual health and maternal care are well-recognized barriers to achieving global and local public health goals. Yet, sufficient investments in these critical services for women, in all our diversity, are lacking and often an afterthought. We urge you to put women at the center of the United Kingdom's International Development Agenda, both in terms of priorities and in terms of utilizing funding to make strategic investments in women-led, community-led responses. Such investments will rectify the chronic underfunding of women's organizations and invest appropriately in the capacitation, support, and prioritization of women's organizations to lead efforts in securing SRHR and addressing HIV.

UNAIDS has set a goal that 80% of services for women, including prevention services for women at increased risk to acquire HIV, as well as programmes and services for access to HIV testing, linkage to treatment (ART), adherence and retention support, reduction/elimination of violence against women, reduction/elimination of HIV related stigma and discrimination among women, legal literacy and legal services specific for women- related issues, to be delivered by community-led organizations that are women-led. Significant investments in women's organizations are needed to achieve this goal. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the ways that even unfunded women's networks were on the frontline of caring for communities and providing critical insights and deep knowledge about what their communities needed to survive the crisis, even as SRHR was deprioritized. Women's organizations have been historically underfunded and many organizations have folded due to lack of investments. It is time we recognized the essential role of women's organizations with sufficient investment. We urge the United Kingdom to recognize this goal and include it within its priorities for International Development Aid.

We urgently call for increased investment in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. The effects of UK funding cuts on the work of the Global Fund and UNAIDS will create extreme jeopardy for women around the world and likely have deadly repercussions on women living with HIV. As a global community committed to public health and women's equality we cannot ignore the backslide on women's rights currently occurring around the world. Now is not the time to take a step back on

SRHR. It is more urgent than ever that the UK step up and provide leadership for women to counter these harmful and regressive trends.

The Global Fund and UNAIDS play essential roles in advocating for policies and strategies that protect the SRHR of women living with HIV. The Global Fund and UNAIDS contribute to funding ART programs and support prevention initiatives targeting key populations, including women, to reduce new HIV infections. This funding represents 30% of all international financing for HIV programs, supporting SRHR and ensures access to life-saving medications for women living with HIV. Funding cuts can lead to shortages of medication supplies, reducing availability and accessibility to ART for women, with challenging consequences for the efficacy of treatment and ultimately affecting their ability to realize their SRHR. Funding cuts also weaken the collective capacity of women, including women living with HIV, to engage in advocacy efforts, resulting in less attention to addressing gender-specific challenges, such as inequities, gender-based violence, stigma, discrimination and other human rights abuses. We emphasize the need to prioritize and amplify comprehensive sexuality education curricula and acknowledge all aspects of SRHR, including safe and legal abortion for women living with HIV. It is imperative to increase funding to support initiatives that address the broader SRHR needs of women living with HIV, including bodily autonomy, access to reproductive health services including family planning and access to safe abortion as a fundamental part of basic healthcare services. Women and girls around the world are counting on you.

**ICW has made several statements on the importance of SRHR funding:**

6 ICW Non - Negotiables to Achieve Gender Equality & SRHR for All in the HLM 2021 Political Process

[https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6\\_8dbf4e4db9b74417abadbc1b1db870e9.pdf](https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6_8dbf4e4db9b74417abadbc1b1db870e9.pdf)

5 Approaches to Improve the WHO Global Health Sector Strategies for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and STIs through a Gender Equity Lens

[https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6\\_13bbd0cfeed746c1b52d471cd4f172aa.pdf](https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6_13bbd0cfeed746c1b52d471cd4f172aa.pdf)

Joint Global Fund Recommendations ICW, GNP+, and Y+ Global

[https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6\\_1b4a2ad7c92c4da0b6395b15685f2d62.pdf](https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6_1b4a2ad7c92c4da0b6395b15685f2d62.pdf)

Living with HIV in the time of COVID

[https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6\\_6dd1315af17c4b0bb088d8e837aef632.pdf](https://www.wlhiv.org/files/ugd/836bb6_6dd1315af17c4b0bb088d8e837aef632.pdf)